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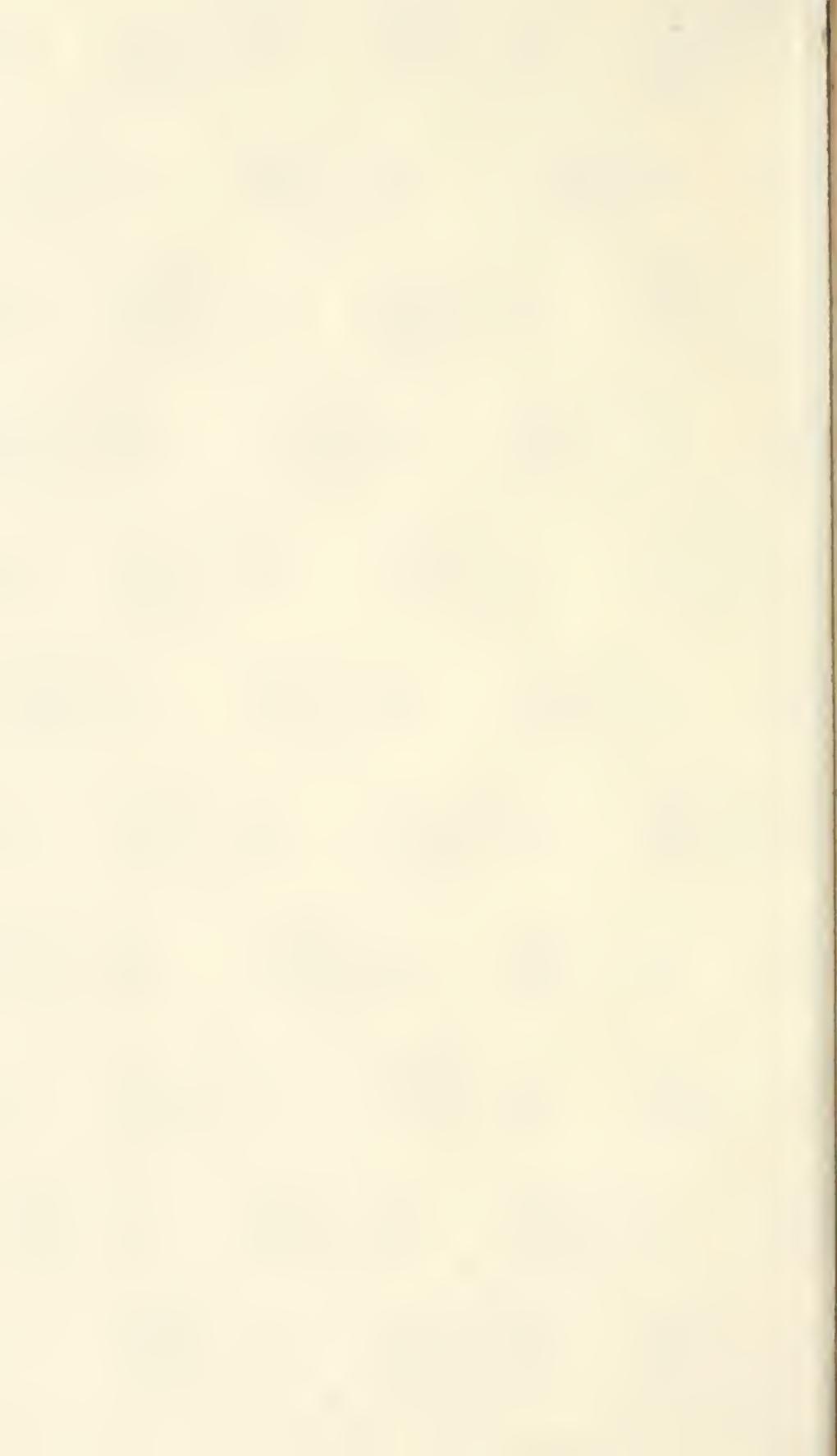


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S K E T C H E S
OF
S E R M O N S,

DELIVERED BY

REV. OWEN DAVIS,
II

IN THE

FIRST FREE BETHEL CHURCH,

IN WEST CENTRE STREET, BOSTON.

BOSTON:
PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,
1837.

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INTRODUCTION.

BY A FRIEND.

To the Publisher :—

SIR,—MR. DAVIS, the author of the following pages, labors under the misfortune of not being able to write, himself, having never been permitted to obtain even a common education. He, therefore, employed me to write these sketches; but not being perfectly acquainted with all the rules of grammar and punctuation, I am aware that I have violated them. He, however, feels satisfied with them as they are—not comprehending the imperfections. I wish you would correct them, that they may appear as decent and respectable as possible. Perhaps he has stated to you his reasons for wishing to publish these sketches in a pamphlet form. There are many professed abolitionists in this city. He, too, is an abolitionist; but they do not agree as to the means to be used to effect emancipation. He has offered these sketches to Mr. Garrison, and he refuses to admit them into his paper. He therefore takes this method to give them publicity. Feeling willing to gratify him, I have done what I could; but have done it very imperfectly.

Respectfully, &c.

A FRIEND TO THE AUTHOR.

S K E T C H E S O F S E R M O N S.

THE following are remarks made by Rev. Owen Davis, when preaching from the 1st verse of the 6th chapter of Joshua :—

“ Jericho was straightly shut up, because of the children of Israel ; none went out, and none came in.”

Because of the colored people in this country, our white brethren shut their churches and their hearts against us. The people of Jericho shut her gates against the children of Israel. God told Joshua precisely how to proceed against those sinners, the inhabitants of Jericho, and he obeyed the command strictly. The compassing the city—the men of war—the seven priests bearing the ark—the seven trumpets of ram’s horns—the compassing the city seven times the seventh day—the blowing of the trumpets—the long blasts—the shouting of the people with a great shout ; all conspired to bring down the walls. It is strange to me that there are so many priests now-a-days, and yet they cannot break the chains of slavery. It must be they do not preach the gospel in its purity. Their preaching avails nothing. It appears to me they are afraid to preach the truth, for fear of offending the people. They don’t tell the people how to go up against the evils of slavery ; they tell them to submit, and not resist those cursed people who are shut up in their churches. They tell the blacks, the God’s suffering people, that they must do nothing, make no effort, don’t resist the oppressor. Is not this slavery in every sense of the word ? My Bible tells me “cursed is the man who handles the word deceitfully.” I very much fear that the religious institutions that we live under here, and high places of learning, are the ruination of thousands. The preachers learn to preach at the high schools, and flourish with their flowery sermons, to please the ear, but it

never reaches the heart. I had rather see them like those priests with Joshua, with "trumpets of ram's horns," and hear them make "a long blast" in trumpeting truth, "that the people may shout, with a great shout," for joy to see slavery's walls come down, and that they may go up in improvement straight before the Lord, our spiritual Joshua. Had the priests done as they were bid, the chains of slavery would have been broken long before this time. Why do not the ministers teach the people what to do, as Joshua did? Had they done so, twenty years ago, we should all be free men and women to-day. But what do they tell us? Why, you must not fight—you must be humble—if you have religion you must not take blood. While they tell us this story, they are all the while training up young men to handle the sword and gun—to use all manner of cursed intrigue—to take the advantage of God's poor, and kill them up; and there have been fools enough to believe them. What did the Indian say? The white man first—Indian second—Indian dog next, and Niger last: this is just the truth; and it will always be so, as long as these false priests are believed. I ask my hearers what difference there is in a plank, one side black and the other white? If there is none, then will I tell you what constitutes a black man. It is a common sin; these false priests, who are like the plank smooth and white on one side, are black as hell within.

Allow me to caution you, priests of Balaam, how you use the black man; mind ye, the same God who made you, made the black man also; and I say be cautious how you use him. Remember, the black man's God both sees and hears you, and will avenge his suffering people of their wrongs. The walls of Jericho will come down, whether the priests blow the trumpet or not. The people will begin the shout, and the people will go up to the enjoyment of liberty, in defiance of all opposition. I am already prepared to declare that we are a free and independent people, through Israel's God.

[Here Mr. Davis gave some account of his native state and parentage. He is the son of a woman who is a slaveholder, and has brothers and sisters who are slave-

holders, but expects they will go to hell for the innocent blood they have shed; and I ought to tell you, too, that they are all church members; but that will not save them from hell, churches and all together.]

I wish you, my colored brethren, to be on your guard against the impositions of false priests; I wish you to remember the "pigeon-holes" or pens they have in their churches, and as you would keep out of perdition, keep out of them. Though God does not say that he has made all of *one color*, yet he declares he has made of "*one blood*" all the nations of the earth: that he "is no respecter of persons," but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him. In your white churches you assign to the colored man a separate seat. Do you expect he will enjoy a separate heaven? or do you expect he will never reach that heaven where nothing shall enter that defileth? You will find yourselves mistaken; for the scripture saith, *in every nation* he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted. Who is it that feareth God? Is it the black man or the white? the pious slave, who dares to pray in defiance of his master's threats, or the tyrant white man, who never calls on God except for curses on the objects of his displeasure? Who worketh righteousness?—the slave who toils for his own and his master's support, or he who steals him from the home of his birth, and withholds from him that which is just and equal, forgetting that he also has a Master in heaven!

Will not He, who created the nations of the earth, call to a dreadful account those who abuse and degrade their brethren who happen to differ from them in color? Degrade! yes, there are those who degrade the colored man beneath the level of the beasts which perish—treat an immortal being as they would not treat a dog! In travelling, I have seen a dog admitted into the stage coach, and the colored man refused a conveyance—and that man a clergyman, too. I have seen dogs admitted to their master's pews in the church, where they could repose quietly, while the sexton would refuse the colored man a seat unless he would allow himself to be conducted to the pigeon-boxes, aloft. Is such conduct

right, in the eyes of Him who sees not as man sees? Are we not all brethren of the same family—children of the same Father—created by the same Being, and bound to the same judgment? Reflect on these things, and remember the golden rule: “Whatsoever ye would that others should do to you, do ye even so to them.”

My Brethren and Friends: I stand before you probably for the last time. I have often addressed you on the subject of human rights; you know my manner of preaching among you; how that in all simplicity and honesty I have tried to bring before you the duty you owe to your God, to your fellow creatures, and to yourselves, in this day of trials and difficulties; I have often referred you to the Old Testament for that which was once delivered to the saints; but I have been told that these things are all done away in Christ: All things are done away, say they, and all things have become new. Have they? Well, we will look at this a little, and see how it is; for I will take no man's word for it, but the Father's only. What do you say, Father? I say, when four kings went to war against Gibeon, I sent my servant Joshua, saying unto him, fear them not, for I have delivered them into thy hands; there shall not a man stand before thee. What else did you do, Father? I caused the sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon; and the sun stood still, and the moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. What else did you do, Father? When Jabin and Sisera arose against Israel, my people, then I sent Deborah and Borak unto them, saying go and draw near unto Mount Tabor, and take with thee ten thousand men of Naphtah and of the children of Zebulon, and I will draw near unto thee to the river Kishon, Sisera the captain of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his multitude, and I will deliver him into thine hands. And the Lord discomfited Sisera, and all his chariots and his host, with the edge of the sword, before Borak, so that Sisera alighted down off his chariot, and fled away on his feet. What else, Father? When Israel was oppressed for their sins, by Midian, then I sent my servant Gideon, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the

hands of the Midianites. Have I not sent thee? And Gideon said unto God, if thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as thou hast said, Behold, I will put a fleece of wool in the floor, and if the dew be on the fleece only, and if it be dry upon all the earth beside, then shall I know thou wilt save Israel by mine hand, as thou hast said. And it was so; for he rose up, early in the morning, and thrust the fleece together, and wringed the dew out of the fleece a bowl full of water. And what more did you do, Father? I reduced Gideon's army of thirty and two thousand down to three hundred men: these I proved to be fit for my work, by their lapping the water with their tongue as the dog laps, and I said by the three hundred men that lapped, will I save you; and it came to pass, the same night, that the Lord said unto him arise, get the down unto the host, for I have delivered it into thy hands. And what more did you do, Father? When my servant Hezekiah was sick unto death, I sent my phrophet Isaiah unto him, saying, set thy house in order, for thou shall die and not live; then he turned his face to the wall and prayed, and I forgave him his sins, and gave him a sign that he should go out, after three days, and have fifteen years added to his life. What was that sign, Father? Why, I brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by the which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz. These are some of the wonders wrought by the unchanging power of God, under the Mosaic Dispensation!

Now we will turn and see what Paul says of these things, under the gospel. Paul says to Timothy, all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. And we hear him telling the Hebrews, by faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed seven days; by faith the harlot Rahab perished, not with them that believed, not when she had received the spies in peace.

And what shall I say more? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Borak—of Sampson—of Zephtha—of David, also—and of the prophets, who,

through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouth of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, caused valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Now does it appear that Paul considered that faith, which wrought such works as these, dead, because it was not given under the gospel dispensation ? By no means ; but he confirms it by the gospel of Christ. If in all generations the perfections of God are not the same, what consolation could the race of men draw from his ancient word ? Why are we told of the cloud of witnesses, that stand on record, of Joshua and Gideon, Zephitha and Sampson, who through faith obtained promises ? What were the promises they did obtain ? Why were they so oppressed by their enemies that they could not serve God, according to the dictates of their own conscience, as God would have them do ? Then he commanded them, and that with a promise, too—a promise of success confirmed to them by signs and wonders, to go forward and deliver themselves, by his might and power ; and they did so, and here it stands on record, for the instruction, as Paul tells us, of all who are oppressed and enslaved, contrary to the law and command of our God.

Now, then, my brethren, what have you to fear in going forward in the way of your duty ? All the promises of God are yours. In what instance has the united prayer of faith been rejected ? When were the righteous forsaken ? Who can charge God, and not charge him foolishly ? What injustice has been found in the Judge of all the earth ? What more can I say, if there be any bowels of compassion in you, for the millions of people that are in bondage ? Let me again entreat you to be united ; let your voices be heard as the voice of one man ; let not the curse of the angel fall upon you, as it did upon Meroh : Curse ye, Meroh, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitant thereof, because ye came not up to the help of the Lord—to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

I will again call your minds to the evils that exist in the churches against you : these are the hot beds of all prejudice against you. I am sorry that I gave offence, in condemning their hen-coops and pigeon-boxes which they have for you ; but I have done it, and may do it again. I have been in the cause of my Master ever since I was fifteen years of age. I have travelled through

the twenty-four States, and I am persuaded that there is nothing that prevents our being united, and becoming a free and an independent people, but this want of interest in the common cause of our people held out by the preachers of the gospel. They tell you that it is wrong for you to claim your rights, when God tells you, in his word, that it is his will you should do it. He says he sits the solitary in families ; he bringeth out those that are bound in chains. Again he says, though ye have laid among the pots, yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove, covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold ; and again, princes shall come out of Egypt ; Etheopia shall soon stretch out her hand unto God. Come up, then, and no longer lay in the dust of death ; and may God be with you, and save you in his coming.

I will state another fact, which has come to my own knowledge ; and that is, I have seen, with my own eyes, six men have their heads chopped off with a broad axe, as a man would kill a few chickens, and placed upon a stake for people to look at, on the public highway !!!

An appeal to those who call themselves abolitionists. I have before told you that I am, myself, a southerner—that I have been trained up in the midst of slavery—that I have travelled through the slave States—and when I speak of slavery, I speak what I do know, and testify to what I have seen. I have seen a man—the image of God—called by the white man a slave, having an iron hoop around his head, resembling a head-stall ; attached to this was a piece of iron, in the form of a bell-clapper, the larger part of it in his mouth, and the small part between his teeth, so that he could not eat till his master saw fit to remove it. This was a punishment inflicted for the crime of killing a beef, on his master's plantation. In addition to the above punishment, he was flogged, by inflicting on him one hundred blows with a paddle containing five holes, each hole raising a blister ; after which salt was applied to the wounds. This took place on the plantation of Lawyer Mears, in North Carolina. If any one wishes for additional testimony, I refer him to Gov. Owen, of N. C.

A slave, belonging to William R. King, of Alabama, run away ; but was retaken and carried to a blacksmith, who prepared for him what may be called a suit of iron ; consisting of bands around his legs and waist—a rod and a bell were attached to these, which reached so far

above his head that he could not touch it with his hands—like as we serve our runaway cows, that we may the more easily find them. I could state thousands of facts similar to these, but perhaps it is unnecessary. Perhaps the slaves are oftener punished for stealing, than for any other crime; but it is seldom they steal any thing except it be to eat,—and this for the plain reason that their masters do not provide for them a sufficient quantity of food to satisfy the cravings of appetite. Moreover, their masters instruct them to steal whatever they can which does not belong to them, provided they can do it without being apprehended. As it respects clothing, they are not well supplied—sometimes they have one pair of shoes for the winter—sometimes none. The cold causes their feet to crack; in consequence of which they bleed in such a manner that I have often tracked them from their cabins to their field of labor. Oh! my country, my country! it is red with black men's blood!! and black with white men's crimes!!!

This is but a very brief sketch of what American Slavery is. Those who read their Bibles may draw their own comparisons between American slavery and Egyptian bondage. The American Anti-slavery Society has been in operation several years; its members have been printing and lecturing and begging money, and what have they accomplished? How many slaves have they liberated? Have they bought slaves from bondage with the thousands of dollars they have collected, or have they disposed of it to their own advantage? Is the yoke made any lighter, or the task easier? Not at all; so far from this their masters are more severe than they formerly were. Once they could purchase their own freedom; now they have not that privilege. Once the free man could go amongst them, and preach to them and enlighten them; now, if he goes, he goes at the peril of his life. What good is to result from printing and lecturing? Will it change public opinion? Has it changed it yet? It may be that more has been said and thought upon the subject of slavery than would have been without it. It is very easy to tell the master that he ought to give up his slaves; but he is as unwilling to relinquish the property he holds in slaves as you are to give them their liberty at your expense. You do not deal in slaves, but you make an image of him and sell it, and it is all for money. But if neither preaching nor money will redeem them from bondage, they may forever remain

as they are ; for the chance is not so good for them to assert their liberty as it once was ; and if it were, the friend of the slave is not willing he should assert it. We are for peace—submit to your fate—obey your masters—let no blood be shed. And has no blood been shed in the years that you have been printing and lecturing and crying peace, peace ? How many slaves have died in bondage since then ? How many at this moment are in prison, and none to comfort them ? How many are sick, and none to visit them ? How many husbands and wives are parted—how many infants are torn from their mothers arms, and who preaches peace to these ? Whose blood, let me ask, is most dear—that of the tyrant, or the slave ? Who can tell which will cost the most suffering—an effort on the part of the slaves to assert their rights, or years of uncomplaining servitude ? You say I am for war. The Bible says, “ Whoso stealeth a man, and be be found with him, he shall surely be put to death.” You will say this is the law, but it is done away in Christ. What does Christ say ? He says, “ I come not to send peace on earth, but a sword ; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother,” &c. Would to God the bondsmen of America had a leader like unto Moses, who would bring them forth from worse than Egyptian bondage, before this nation is visited with the judgments due to its multiplied crimes.

When Moses began to preach to Pharaoh, to let the Children of Israel go, instead of diminishing, he increased their tasks ; and it has been so with our people. May we not reasonably expect that this nation will be visited with judgments as Egypt was ? It has been said that they were ransomed without the shedding of blood. How was it, when Moses went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens ? Why, “ he espied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren, and he looked this way, and that way, and when he saw no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. How was it when Pharaoh and his hosts pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea ? Why, they were all drowned. It was the work of the Divine avenger ; and shall we say it was not just and right ? We are commanded to remember those who are in bonds as bound with them ; if we did so remember them—if we feel the galling yoke—should we sit at our ease, and make no greater effort than to raise our pen

or our voice, for liberty? I think I know we should. Let us earnestly inquire if there is nothing more we can do than we have already done. If the peaceable measures of the abolitionists have accomplished any thing, I rejoice at it—if they would do the whole work I should be glad; but I would like to see this work begin at home. Prejudice is the foundation of slavery, and I have seen much more of it at the North than I ever have at the South. I like sincerity—I like to see practising as well as preaching. When I can see prejudice done away at the north, I will consider the work as half accomplished. But how many are there of the professed abolitionists who are free from it? Do you associate with the free men of color, as you do with your white brethren? Do you walk with them in the street? Do you sit with them in your churches? Do your children attend the same school? The remarks which I have made will not trouble those who are thorough. Let those who are not thorough ask for clean hands, and a heart pure in the sight of God.

I will relate an anecdote illustrative of northern prejudice. The following conversation took place in the City of Boston, recently. A sister of a certain church enquired of another, who had lately made a profession of religion, who baptized her? She replied, "Brother, a colored preacher." The sister, who made the inquiry, was perfectly astonished:—*"A colored preacher! What will the white folks say?"*

I have much more to say, but have not time now. I will only add, "wash you, make you clean, put away the accursed thing from you, and put on charity, which is the lover of perfectness."

